

REMARKS

Claims 1-11 are in this application and are presented for consideration. By this amendment, Applicant has amended claims 1, 2 and 4-6. New dependent claims 9-11 have been added.

Claims 1-8 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as being anticipated by Strum et al. (U.S. 4,872,940).

The present invention relates to a method and a device for butt welding metal sheets. The method and the device comprise at least two tension rollers that are arranged above the metals sheets. The two tension rollers arranged above the metal sheets are movable in height and/or roll on the metal sheets in a spring-loaded manner. At least two rollers are arranged below the metal sheets. The two rollers arranged below the metal sheets include a tension roller on one side of the weld seam that is adjusted in height. The height of the adjustable tension roller is adjusted during the welding operation such that a thickness jump occurs in the weld seam between the upper side and the lower side of the metal sheets. This advantageously allows the rollers to adjust to varying thicknesses of the metal sheets. This provides a quicker means of welding the metal sheets together since the sheets do not have to be rotated or repositioned. The prior art as a whole fails to teach or suggest such features or such metal sheet thickness adjustment advantages.

Strum et al. discloses two strips 1, 2 to be welded together that are moved together at an acute angle by guide means such that their adjacent edges abut in the zone between two tension rollers 3, 4. The top tension roller 3 is mounted pivotably by means of a rocker 6 in

a bearing block 6a, so that it can be adjusted vertically in relation to the bottom tension roller 4. A hydraulically actuatable height stop 6b is used for adjusting the height of the tension roller 3. While the top tension roller 3 is freely pivotably mounted, the bottom tension roller 4, mounted in a bearing block 7, is driven by a drive 5 via a belt 5a. The rocker 6 has two independently pivotable arms 15, 16 each of which bears one half 3a, 3b of the tensioning roller 3.

Strum et al. fails to teach and fails to suggest the combination of at least one tension roller that is located below metal sheets wherein the at least one tension roller is adjustable in height. Strum et al. only discloses one tension roller 4 that is arranged below the metal sheets 1, 2 that are welded to one another. However, Strum et al. clearly discloses that the one tension roller 4 arranged below the metal sheets 1, 2 cannot be adjusted in height since the tension roller 4 is mounted in a fixed bearing block 7 that is arranged on the ground. This is a completely different approach than that of the present invention. Compared to Strum et al., there are at least two movable tension rollers that are arranged above the metal sheets in the present invention and a height adjustable tension roller that is arranged below the metal sheets, on one side of the weld seam. This advantageously allows the one tension roller to change its height so that sheets of varying thickness can be received. Strum et al. fails to disclose such thickness adjusting advantages since the tension roller 4 remains in a fixed position and its height cannot be changed as featured in the present invention. In fact, Strum et al. does not provide any teaching or suggestion for changing the height of the tension roller 4 during an ongoing welding operation so that a thickness jump occurs between the upper side and the

lower side of the metal sheets 1, 2 as claimed. Such a selective alternation of the thickness jump in the area of one and the same weld seam as featured in the present invention is not disclosed in Strum et al. As such, the prior art as a whole takes a completely different approach and fails to teach or suggest important features of the claimed combination. Accordingly, Applicant respectfully requests that the Examiner favorably consider claims 1, 4 and 5 as now presented and all claims that respectively depend thereon.

Applicant has added new dependent claims 9-11 to further clarify the features of the invention. Specifically new claims 9-11 highlight that one of the rollers arranged below the metal sheets is in a fixed position while the other roller arranged below the metal sheets is height adjustable. Strum et al. does not disclose such features since Strum et al. only discloses one tension roller 4 located below the metal sheets 1, 2. Accordingly, Applicant respectfully requests that the Examiner favorably consider new dependent claims 9-11.

Favorable consideration on the merits is requested.

Respectfully submitted
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